



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

May 16, 2006

News Release

Two Dominican men nabbed for smuggling Cubans

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Two Dominican men who allegedly smuggled a group of Cubans into the United States through Mona Island in Puerto Rico were charged here today with human smuggling following a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigation.

Carlos de Jesus Morales, 25, and Ivan Madrigal, 26, along with eight Cubans were spotted Friday by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) patrol aircraft eight miles west of the Island of Mona.

Upon interception of the yola —a small, fragile boat used for human smuggling—the two alleged Dominican captains and the group of Cubans were transferred to Mayaguez, Puerto Rico onboard of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Ocracoke

A preliminary investigation by ICE identified De Jesus-Morales and Madrigal as the alleged human smugglers.

“We hope to send a clear message to those who think the Island of Mona will continue to be a transshipment point for Cuban smuggling from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE in Puerto Rico. “ICE and its Department of Homeland Security (DHS) partners will continue its investigative efforts to shut down the Cuban smuggling route through Mona Island and to dismantle alien smuggling organizations whose only goal is to profit at the expense of others.”

The ICE investigation into this smuggling ring is ongoing. De Jesus-Morales and Madrigal are in federal custody and have been transferred to the Metropolitan Detention Center in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico where they await the outcome of their case.

This enforcement action was part of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a comprehensive multi-year plan launched by the Department of Homeland Security to secure America’s borders and reduce illegal migration. Under SBI, Homeland Security seeks to gain operational control of both the northern and southern borders, while re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that

illegal aliens are removed from the country quickly and efficiently. SBI also involves strong interior enforcement efforts, including enhanced worksite enforcement investigations and intensified efforts to track down and remove illegal aliens inside this country.

The public is reminded that a criminal complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial and the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.